

# COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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## SUMMARY OF POLITICS.

PRINCESS OF WALES. — I have very much wished to avoid taking any part in the discussions, which have, in the public prints, been for some time going on, relative to the Princess of Wales, her Royal Spouse, and their Daughter; but, I now find it impossible to keep silence upon the subject any longer, without abandoning what, as a public writer, I deem to be my duty. — It is well known, that, for many years, the Prince and Princess have not inhabited the same house. I shall not affect any feelings of lamentation upon this score. Not knowing the parties personally, it is impossible that I can have any feelings personally towards either. I view the matter with the eyes of a spectator, concerned merely as one of the King's subjects; and, as such, I might have my feelings of alarm for the public welfare as affected by this domestic circumstance. But, I do not know that this *bare* circumstance would be of any weight in a national point of view. The circumstance, however, is not a *bare* one. It is accompanied with others. We see the Princess not only excluded from her husband's dwelling-place, or, at least, living away from it; but, we also see her without the means of keeping her state as the consort of the Prince, her husband. We see her living in obscurity. We see her absent from Court. And, while we see all this, we hear the Prince's own Ministers distinctly declare, that there has been *nothing criminal in her conduct*. — Were we, under all these circumstances, to remain insensible to her situation, we should deserve the character of a cowardly, a doltish, and even a base people. — I wish not to teach the propriety of prying into the domestic unhappiness of the Royal family; I wish not to be instrumental in widening a breach, which, seemingly, cannot be closed; but, I do wish to inculcate the justice of letting the Princess of Wales see, that we feel for her as men ought to feel for any woman similarly situated. — We saw, in the public prints, some time back, an

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visiting her daughter. — Whether this was really the case or not, it is no matter: the fact was *believed*, and, therefore, the effect was the same. That effect was; that effect must have been, injurious to the Royal Mother; for, on what ground can it have been, that a mother was shut out from access to her child? — Many fathers and mothers have separated for life; but, what are the *causes*, which, whenever it is the case, produce a prohibition against the mother visiting her children? I am not aware of any *punishment* much more severe than this; and, yet, the Prince's own Ministers have solemnly declared, that the Princess is free from *crime*. — I shall now proceed to insert a paragraph from the Morning Chronicle of Monday last, from which it would appear, that Her Royal Highness has written a Letter to the Prince Regent, which he has refused to receive. I pretend not to possess any information upon the subject, except that which reaches me through the public prints. All my remarks, therefore, must be bottomed upon the articles which I shall cite; and I shall insert them as I find them, without the smallest change in any part. — The first (of the date before mentioned) is in the following words: — “The controversy into which we were drawn by the unconstitutional insinuations of a well-known Writer in *The Courier*, has drawn from other Journals animadversions and censures which we cannot suffer to pass unnoticed. We are accused in one Paper of striving to sow divisions between father and daughter, while another says that we prove ourselves to be utterly ignorant of the matter that so naturally interests the public. The first of these accusations is that alone upon which we feel it to be important to defend ourselves, because we do not conceive any conduct to be more base or detestable than an attempt to sow divisions in a house; and if this be true, even in the domestic circle of private society, how much more heinous would be the crime if perpetrated against that illustrious family with whose union and happiness the safety and wel-



“fare of the English people are so closely  
 “connected? We are sure that the readers  
 “of *The Morning Chronicle* will do us the  
 “justice to say, that we have most care-  
 “fully abstained from all reference to the  
 “unhappy separation between their Royal  
 “Highnesses the Prince Regent and his  
 “Princess, which has been the source of  
 “so much grief to every well-disposed  
 “heart, and that there will not be found  
 “on the file of *The Morning Chronicle* the  
 “trace of an opinion, or of a hint, as to  
 “which of the parties was in the right and  
 “which in the wrong. This forbearance  
 “rose alone from the delicacy of the sub-  
 “ject, and not from our total ignorance, as  
 “alleged by one of our competitors, since  
 “we have certainly had the opportunity of  
 “forming a judgment on the case. Our  
 “readers will agree with us, that circum-  
 “stances may be known to the Editor of a  
 “Journal that it would be highly improper  
 “in him to divulge—and this is one upon  
 “which we have entertained the fervent  
 “hope that the good sense, the liberal  
 “feeling, the natural interest, the indisso-  
 “luble connexion of the parties, would be  
 “the means of sinking it into oblivion.  
 “For this every endearing sentiment of  
 “private affection to the object of their  
 “mutual tenderness, as well as every mo-  
 “tive of public duty, must have strongly  
 “impelled them—and happily against it  
 “there could be no party influence, no fac-  
 “tious counsel; for it is a subject upon  
 “which no party in the State could be  
 “hardy or base enough to interfere.—We  
 “long, therefore, cherished the hope that  
 “the delicate investigation, as it is called,  
 “would never see the light; but we own,  
 “that for the last two months we have  
 “seen cause to lose our confidence in its  
 “suppression—for so many hints and in-  
 “nuendoes, advertisements and notices have  
 “appeared in various ways, as to convince  
 “us that there was a deliberate intention  
 “somewhere to bring the whole case before  
 “the public. A recent occurrence has  
 “strengthened that conviction in our mind,  
 “and which, we have no doubt, will bring  
 “it immediately forth.—About the middle  
 “of January last, the *Princess of Wales* ad-  
 “dressed a sealed letter to the Prince Re-  
 “gent. It was transmitted by Lady Char-  
 “lotte Campbell to the Lord Chancellor  
 “and the Earl of Liverpool (together with  
 “an unsealed copy of its contents, for their  
 “perusal), by command of Her Royal  
 “Highness, and desiring that it might be  
 “laid before the Prince Regent. This let-

“ter was sent back the next day by the  
 “Earl of Liverpool to Lady Charlotte  
 “Campbell, with an intimation, that as all  
 “correspondence had ceased for some years,  
 “it was His Royal Highness’s determina-  
 “tion not to renew it. The letter address-  
 “ed to the Prince was therefore returned  
 “with the seal unbroken. *The letter was*  
*“returned by the Princess, with an intima-*  
*“tion that it contained matter of import-*  
*“ance to the State;* but the letter was  
 “again sent back unopened, and some fur-  
 “ther correspondence took place on the  
 “subject, but without any notification of  
 “His Royal Highness’s pleasure thereon.  
 “—Copies of this letter of complaint and  
 “remonstrance have found their way into  
 “circulation in the upper ranks of society,  
 “and this is the circumstance that gives us  
 “reason to apprehend that all hopes of  
 “further concealment of the whole pro-  
 “ceedings in the Inquiry which took place  
 “in 1806 and 1807 are now fled—since it  
 “relates both to the Princess of Wales her-  
 “self, and the *Princess Charlotte*; and we  
 “have no doubt, from the notoriety of the  
 “fact, that it will be soon communicated  
 “to the public.”—The *Courier* hav-  
 “ing, in its remarks upon this article, ac-  
 “cused the *Chronicle* of endeavours to create  
 “divisions in the Royal family, the latter, on  
 “the next day, replied in the following  
 “terms.—“It was quite in the order of  
 “political candour, that *The Courier* should  
 “ascribe to the Party what the Editor  
 “knew to be our own individual act. He  
 “little knows the sentiments or the feelings  
 “of the great united body of Noblemen  
 “and Gentlemen, who oppose a system of  
 “ministerial policy which they think preg-  
 “nant with national ruin, if he supposes  
 “that they mix with that opposition any  
 “thing like hostility to the Illustrious Fa-  
 “mily on the throne—or that they would  
 “countenance any measure that should tend  
 “to sow division among its Members.  
 “We have again and again asserted, that  
 “those persons have kept themselves most  
 “studiously apart from all interference in  
 “the matter to which so much allusion has  
 “been made. And if the Editor of *The*  
*“Courier* had taken time to consult his  
 “Noble Familiar on the point, he might  
 “have learnt that an Illustrious Personage  
 “has much more right to expect interfer-  
 “ence and protection from the Prince Re-  
 “gent’s actual Ministers, than from any  
 “Member of the Opposition. And, in  
 “fact, it could not be from them, or  
 “through them, that we derived any infor-



"mation that we possess on the subject, since the *letter of complaint and remonstrance*, after an interval of several days without an answer, was sent, as we understand, to an *Honourable Baronet*, who makes it his boast that he belongs to no party.—The fact is, that the paper has for some time been the topic of universal conversation—that it is represented to be a document of a public character, and of national interest; and it is notorious, that copies of it are in circulation. When we know, therefore, that it was published as effectually as the libel against an exalted person, which paved the way for its author to the highest offices in the state instead of a prison, we felt it to be our duty to communicate the important circumstance to our readers; and this, upon every such occasion, we are bound in the discharge of that duty to do, safe as we know we shall find ourselves in the candour of the public from the misinterpretations of rivalry or malignity."—Now, *if it be true* (for I do not pretend to say that it is), that the Princess has sent a Letter, in the way here stated; and that the Letter was asserted by her to contain matter of *importance to the state*; and, further, that its contents were connected with the transactions of 1806 and 1807; if, I say, all this be true, the subject cannot receive too much of the serious attention of the public.—It must not be said, that the public is here called upon to pry into the private affairs of the Prince's family; it must not be said, that this is exciting an idle curiosity; for, if the matter of the Letter be of importance to the state, it must be of importance to the people, for whose benefit the state, and all the powers of the state, have been created and ought to exist.—We are, moreover, here told, that the matter of the Letter related to the *Princess Charlotte of Wales*, as well as to her Royal Mother; and this renders that matter of fearful importance to the people, who must not be told, that *they have no business with it*, because they have business with every thing appertaining to the royal succession.—It is possible, and, indeed, it is very likely, that Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales may, as it is natural she should, wish to produce an inquiry into what was done in 1806 and 1807; for, after all the publications which have taken place as to her being refused permission to see her daughter, and after all the insinuations that low and base pan-  
 ders have circulated, it would argue an in-

difference to character in her, if she were to remain wholly silent. Conscious of her innocence, she now, apparently, is taking the means of making it clear to the whole world, and to produce some better voucher for it than the acknowledgment of the Prince's Ministers, though that, with me, was quite sufficient.—In addition to what is said in the above paragraphs, the *Courier* of the 9th instant states, that "it is rumoured, that *SIR FRANCIS BURDETT* means to propose, that, in case of the death of the Prince Regent before the Princess Charlotte attains her 18th year, *the regency shall be vested in her Royal Mother, till she attains that age.*" Whether this be fact, or not, I pretend not to know. Indeed, I know no more about the fact than one of my sheep; but, this I know well, that the measure would be a very proper one, and I am very much deceived if it would not meet with an unanimity of approbation that scarcely any measure ever before met with.—The nation is naturally anxious upon this subject. To be truly loyal, it must feel such anxiety. Who can the nation see, after the Prince, so proper to hold the Regency as the Princess of Wales, her daughter not being of the constitutional age? Who is there to be named that can, in nature, be supposed so likely to take care of the interests of the Daughter as the Mother of that Daughter? Besides, in what school could that Daughter so well learn to govern? A mother, endowed with great talents, and especially the talent of making herself beloved by those who approach her; a mother, who, to great knowledge of the affairs of state, is, by all those who have the honour to know her personally, said to possess an union of dignity and conciliation of manners, far surpassing, very far indeed surpassing, any thing which any other person has been observed to possess. With a year or two of the example of such a mother before her, what might we not hope for in our future Queen?—And, as to the *claim* of the Princess, no man, I presume, will attempt to dispute that; or, at least, the doctrine of the Ministers, as to the Regency, gives her as fair a claim as she need to wish for.—Such a measure would put an end to all doubts and fears upon the subject of the Regency, the Princess being of an age and a constitution which promise us many years' duration of her life.—She is, too, perfectly free from all *party* connexions. Both the *parties*, as they call each other, stand, and ought to stand, upon a perfect level



with her. The treatment she has received from each is so nearly of a character to what she has received from the other, that she must be very able indeed, in her discriminating faculties, to be able to distinguish between their respective merits with regard to her.—She would, therefore, be, in this respect, what the ruler of a nation ought to be: she would look to the *people*, and not to a *faction*, for the support of her authority and her dignity.—I do not, after all, say, that this measure would be absolutely necessary; for, I see no reason why the Princess Charlotte herself, in case of the unfortunate event of her Royal Father's death during the King's life, should not, at once, become Regent. I know of nothing that stands in the way of this; but, if any intermediate Regent be necessary, then, I think, it is obvious, that the Mother of our future Queen ought to hold that exalted situation.—At any rate, if the proposition be made, and with *her privity*, as the *COURIER* hints, it will amount to such proof of her conscious innocence, it will be so decided a challenge to her enemies, that, unless they speak, and speak *out* too, they must for ever after hold their calumnious tongues.—The reader will bear in mind, I am sure, that, at the time of establishing the present Regency, I expressed my surprise and my regret, that no establishment was made for the Princess Regent. The separation of dwelling-places was a fact well known; but it seemed unaccountable, that the Royal Wife should not have felt, in any degree, the effects of the Husband's exaltation. From *that time* the eyes of the nation, and of all Europe, have been fixed upon the Princess of Wales. It was not to be expected, that she would remain for ever silent; and, at last, after long and patient endurance, she appears, from the above publications, to have broken her silence.—If no declaration had been made from authority as to her innocence, her case would have been much less interesting; but, that innocence has been publicly and explicitly acknowledged by the Prince's own chosen minister, who, it is well known, was in possession of all the facts; and, after that acknowledgment, made in the House of Commons, and published to the whole world, who did not expect to see the Princess with an establishment suited to the new rank of Her Royal Spouse?—The Princess's conduct, it is well known, became the subject of investigation by four Commissioners, acting under the King's

warrant. The result of that investigation was a report to the King by the Commissioners, Lords *Erskine*, *Ellenborough*, *Grenville*, and *Spencer*. This report was, of course, recorded somewhere. It must, therefore, be now in existence. It must either *acquit* or *condemn* her Royal Highness. If the latter, can the reader believe, that it would have lain so long unread by the public; and, if the former, what ground can there be for her not having an establishment suited to her high rank? But, we know, that the Report of the Commissioners *did not* condemn her; for, immediately after it was made, she reappeared at Court; and, besides, *Perceval*, who had read and long considered that Report, declared, even after he was chosen minister by the Prince, that he knew of *nothing criminal* against her.—Now, need I, after the stating of these circumstances, appeal to the justice of the reader in behalf of her claim to all the marks of dignity and of honour that a nation can bestow?—If, after *Perceval's* declaration, any doubt could have remained with regard to her perfect innocence, that doubt must now be removed, if the above statement as to her *letter of complaint and remonstrance* be true. Guilty persons do not voluntarily come forward to complain of their treatment. They very carefully abstain from stirring the subject as to which they have been accused. Happy to have the whole affair forgotten, they feel grateful to the world if it will but hold its tongue. The conduct of the Princess, if the above statements be true, is the reverse of this; and, therefore, to believe the stories that have, by base tongues, been circulated against her, would be to set common sense as well as common justice at defiance.—For my part, I have never known, I have never had the slightest acquaintance with any person in the interest of the Princess of Wales. I judge, from what I read and what I hear of her, as I should judge of any other person. I have, too, anxiously wished to avoid saying a word upon the subject; but, when it is made to occupy so conspicuous a place in the other public prints; when it is thus forced upon the attention of the public, it would seem strange if I longer refrained from taking a part in the discussion. The subject does, too, become of vast importance when taken into view with the *succession to the Regency*, a matter in which the nation is vitally interested. His Majesty may, indeed, recover from his ma-



lady; and, in that case, there would be, probably, little reason for making the provision in question; but, while he remains in his present state, to provide for a due succession to the Regency is as necessary as to be provided for a due succession to the Throne.—I should here, for the present, put an end to my remarks upon this subject; but, a paragraph in the *Courier*, charging those who agitate the question with *disloyal* views, calls for some notice, and particularly as it censures the act of making the "*Letter of complaint and remonstrance*" public. — "Not having seen the Letter ourselves, we are unable to state whether the character given of it is a just one or not, but thinking, as we do, that it is quite impossible the illustrious Personage, who is thus indecorously attacked, should have directed copies of such a letter to be taken, and one to be sent to a political character, who had given notice of a motion relative to the presumptive heiress to the throne, we do hope that some method may be found of making it publicly known, that such a proceeding is not only without her sanction, but that it meets with her decided disapprobation."

—And why? Why should she not cause copies of her Letter to be taken? No reason is given for this, and therefore the censure might pass unnoticed. But, was she, after her Letter (if such was the fact) had been twice sent to the Prince and twice returned unopened, not to be at liberty to show a copy of it to any one? This is the most unreasonable thing that I remember ever to have heard of. Was she not to show to any soul living the contents of a Letter written by herself! To what a state would this impudent man reduce her! It is as miserable a privilege as can be imagined to be allowed to show one's own Letters; but this, it seems, is too much to be allowed to the Princess of Wales. And, what a poor, spiritless creature must she be, if she waited for permission to show a copy of such a letter!—If her Letter had been received and the receipt of it acknowledged, she would have been at perfect liberty to show copies of it to whomsoever she pleased; but, when it was sent back unopened, and a second time too, was she still to be forbidden to show the contents of it to any one? There is but one step further for this man to go; and that is, to deny her the right of *opening her lips in the way of complaint*; after which he would easily come to a denial of her right to

breathe. But, breathe she will, I trust, and speak and write, and make her case known, whatever it may be, in spite of censures such as these. Besides, is it to do justice to the Prince himself, thus to complain, that she has made her feelings known? His Royal Highness is stated to have refused to open the Letter, in order to avoid renewing a painful correspondence; but, could he have entertained the expectation, or even the wish, that the Princess should tell no one what she had written? I cannot believe this without being wanting in respect for both the head and the heart of the Regent, and, therefore, I will not believe it.—This writer says, that the making of the contents of the Letter known was "*unnecessary and indelicate*:" and, why was it unnecessary? Why, "because he cannot see how the Letter can be made a subject of *Legislative interference*." Marvellous reason! So, then, nothing ought to be made public because it cannot become a matter of Legislative interference! A man may have subject of complaint against one neighbour, and may write to him upon it; but, he must not show his letter to another neighbour because it cannot become a subject of discussion in St. Stephen's! This is very hard, but it is still harder to be refused the privilege of making his complaint known, merely because the person to whom the Letter is sent *returns it unopened*. It is *indelicate*; indelicate to show the inside of a letter to any one else, because it has been sent back unopened by the person to whom it is addressed! This is *indelicate*!—But, indeed, such trumpery accusations as these only tend to show the goodness of the Princess's cause. They only tend to show that nothing substantial can be alleged against her. Twenty advocates could not plead her cause so forcibly and effectually as one caviller like this. If *this* be the species of indelicacy of which her enemies have to accuse her; if such be to be called *charges*, well may she, as she is said to do, laugh her malevolent accusers to scorn.

CATHOLIC CLAIMS.—The question as to these Claims is, it seems, now again to be agitated in parliament. It has already been agitated in the country, and the result has been, in almost every instance, against the granting of the demands of the Catholics.—I am sorry for this, because I wish that all the restraints, that every thing like religious tests, were done away. But, it is clear, that the people of Eng-



land are decidedly against the Catholics. The reason is, they do not understand the question; they proceed upon old and very just opinions as applicable to former times; they have sucked in with their mother's milk an abhorrence of the Catholic religion, as a persecutor of their forefathers; and this is to be rooted out only by the light of *free discussion*, which we have not in a degree to be efficient for this purpose.—If the Claims were granted; if the act of repeal were passed, no one would raise his voice against the measure; but, those who have an interest in preventing the grant take care that the people shall be appealed to; and, the appeal being made, the opposition is certain.—If any man had been in doubt as to the sentiments of the people on this subject, the proceedings at the late Meetings, in different parts of the kingdom, must have removed that doubt.—I have, below, inserted Mr. Butler's able defence of the Claims of his brethren. It is complete. It, in my opinion, leaves nothing unanswered that has been advanced in opposition to the claims.—Following it, I shall insert the late proceedings in the County of KENT against the Claims, and also a Petition of certain PROTESTANTS IN IRELAND. When the reader has gone through all these, he will have seen what is to be said on both sides; or, rather, he will see, on the side of the Catholics, convincing reasons, and, on the other, the workings of craft upon ignorance.—But, the latter will continue to prevail as long as there are such weighty interests dictating the employment of that craft.—It is, in fact, not at all a question of *religion*. It is a question of interest. The protestants possess the benefits of the Church and the State, and, is it surprising that they do not desire to have *participators with them*? The Clergy are very active in their opposition, and some of them, perhaps, from a dread of the poor old POPE; but, the far greater part have, I am persuaded, the worldly wealth of the Church in their eye. Every admission, in favour of any sect, endangers, as they think, in some degree, this wealth; and, I do not undertake to say, that they are wholly in the wrong in their opinion, especially with regard to a sect so learned in its priesthood, and so ambitious, as that of the Catholics. The property of the Church (which is immense) is, in fact, the property of those who are able to give votes in parliament; and, is it to be supposed, that they will ever give their vote for any measure, which

contains in it the seeds of the most distant danger to that property? — It seems clear to me, that, in Ireland the *abolition of tithes* would speedily follow the granting of the Catholic Claims. I have said so before, and said that I would go that length. But, those who have the bestowing of those tithes are of a very different opinion.—The mass of the people act from ignorance in their opposition to the Claims. They suppose, that by *the Church being in danger* means that the *protestant religion* is in danger. They little dream that, by the *Church*, many of their leaders, mean merely the *tithes* and the *lands* of the Church.—It is curious to see how the sect, called *Methodists*, join in this cry. Led on by the bellowing hypocrites, or fools, whom they call their *ministers*, they seem to believe, that the Catholics are aspiring to the power of tying them to the stake; and thus they become, in this case, the allies of those, whom, upon all other occasions, they are condemning to eternal fire, as vessels formed for destruction! Their hair-brained teachers join most cordially with the Clergy of the establishment in expressing an abhorrence of popish principles, though the principles of the former are worse than the worst part of those taught by the rankest of papists.—In such a state of things how is it to be hoped, that any thing like liberality of sentiment should be brought into a discussion of this question? It cannot be; and, in my opinion, the Claims will never be granted, until such a change of system takes place as shall separate the property of the Church from the power of giving votes in parliament.

WM. COBBETT.

Bolley, 10th February, 1813.

#### CATHOLIC CLAIMS.

*Meeting of the County of Kent against these Claims, held at Maidstone, on the 6th of Feb. 1813.*

On Saturday last, pursuant to a requisition, a Meeting was held at Maidstone, of the Noblemen, Gentlemen, and Inhabitants of the County of Kent, “to consider the propriety of Petitioning Parliament against the present Claims of the Roman Catholics.” Shortly after 12 o'clock, the High Sheriff went to the Town Hall, for the purpose of opening the business of the day; but in consequence of the number of persons present, the Meeting was adjourned





into the street, where the High Sheriff, from a waggon that had been placed to receive him and his friends, read the requisition.

COLONEL STRATFORD then addressed the persons present, and said, that having had the honour to originate the proceeding, by introducing it to the Noblemen and Gentlemen who signed the requisition (18 in number), he now took the liberty of suggesting the propriety of agreeing to a Petition to both Houses of Parliament, in opposition to the present Claims of the Roman Catholics, which, if conceded, would undoubtedly terminate in the subversion of our happy Constitution, since they were directly contrary to the Act of Settlement, wisely provided by our ancestors for the protection of the Protestant Establishment in Church and State. He then handed a Petition to the High Sheriff, which he recommended for adoption.

SIR HENRY HAWLEY heartily seconded the motion, as his opinion was completely coincident. If the Roman Catholics laboured under any religious disabilities, if one statute yet remained in our books controlling the exercise of their faith, he wished that it should be instantly expunged, but he never would consent to grant them political power, by breaking down the Test Act, and other wholesome barriers, raised to exclude them from it. He entertained a very high opinion of the Catholics, and did not believe that they had now an evil intention, but if once allowed what they demanded, who should say that, fifty years hence, the country would not be governed by a Catholic Administration, which probably would end in a Catholic King being placed upon the Throne. That such an event was to be avoided, no man would hesitate to admit.

After a few interlocutory remarks from LORD THANET, Mr. CALCRAFT, and the HIGH SHERIFF, the Petition proposed was read. It, in general terms, expressed that it was dangerous to grant any additional privileges to the Roman Catholics, and that it was impolitic in the legislature to take their claims into consideration.

The EARL of THANET then addressed the Assembly in the following terms;—Although it is true that the Petition proposed was read by the under Sheriff, in an audible voice, yet I cannot say that I was able, in this situation, to catch every word of it: having, however, seen the requisition by which we have been convened, and knowing that the same spirit that dictated that

requisition dictated the Address to both Houses of Parliament, I have no hesitation in saying that it meets with my complete disapprobation. I shall therefore feel it my duty to submit an Amendment of a very different tenour, calculated, as I conceive, to secure the integrity and tranquillity of the Empire. (*Applause.*) During a political life of some length, it has been my misfortune to be often in the minority, and having so frequently before experienced this predicament, I shall not be deterred from performing my duty, by the fear that I shall once more be in that situation. I have, by experience, learned to look at such a circumstance without apprehension, and the habit of being in the minority has almost converted it into a second nature. There is this consolation to be derived from being defeated, that it is a conscientious discharge of duty, and it often happens that much advantage results from a firm resistance, even though it prove ineffectual. It will not be disputed, when I say that the subject of Catholic Emancipation is a question upon which great prejudices prevail,—prejudices, in my opinion, unfounded; and, because I think that they will be gradually removed, I shall tell the Gentlemen calling this Meeting, that it will not be the last time when the matter is here discussed. People, at the first contemplation of what is new and grand, as this question certainly is to most of you, are struck by imaginary terror, that further inquiry will not justify. Whenever the Catholic Claims have been debated in Parliament, I acknowledge that I have always voted for the investigation of their principles, that we might know accurately the grievances of which they complain. I voted for some notice being taken of the Petitions of four millions of men, who were not listened to by many, merely because they were Irishmen, although the same blood flows in their veins as that which flows in our own. Certainly the speeches of the Mover and Seconder were not very well stocked with arguments; and as they seemed unwilling to name them, I shall feel myself at liberty to allude to two or three popular objections to the Claims of the Catholics. First, it is said that they keep no faith with Heretics; secondly, that they are so bound in allegiance to the Pope, that, on his command, they would be compelled to depose or murder their Sovereign. As to the former point, I can say with perfect confidence, that they abhor the position: they have declared their detestation, over and over again, of such an inhuman



and unsocial principle. Upon the bare statement, who can believe that any individuals in a civilized state could countenance such a diabolical principle: but the Catholics directly and positively deny it, and yet it is constantly thrown in their teeth: it is a false imputation cast upon them by their enemies, and this imputation is made their crime. (*Hear, hear!*) Besides this denial to remove the terrors of these alarmists, frightened at the very phantoms they had raised, Mr. Pitt proposed the question, with the utmost solemnity, to six of the principal Roman Catholic Universities.—This was one good action of a man possessing certainly great power, but of whom I must say that a more mischievous Minister this country never saw. (*Some disapprobation.*) I am not, and never will be afraid to speak my honest sentiments, the more necessary since I see that you are so much mistaken in him. These Universities, these depositories of the learning of the Catholics, were horror-struck at the imputation, that Catholics held no faith with Heretics. Let it be likewise remembered, that during the present King's reign several indulgences have already been granted to them; and if it be so dangerous to concede, it will not be denied that the Ministers who advised, and the King who passed such Acts, have done a serious injury to the Protestant religion. But this is weak in comparison with the oath which all Catholics take, and which, in terms as strong as language could afford, swear to the contrary. (The Noble Earl here read the Oath to which he referred.) With these views, I should ill discharge my duty if I did not propose an Amendment, not one drawn up in haste for this occasion, but sanctioned by the adoption of a most enlightened and respectable Meeting in the County of Wilts.—(Lord Thanet read his Amendment, omitting all the words of the original motion, and then continued.) Such a resolution is worthy of the proverbial liberality of the Men of Kent, and I am assured that none will impeach the honesty of my motives in suggesting it; its object is only to lead the Catholics not to despair. There are some shortsighted politicians who argue that when the general sense of the country, as it is called, is obtained by County Meetings, the Catholics will cease to torment the Legislature, having no hope of redress. The effect, I fear, will be far otherwise. It is not a pleasing task to predict disasters, and I hope that the good sense of the people of England will prevent them, because soon-

er or later, I am persuaded, liberality and justice must be triumphant. At any rate, let my proposal be rejected or adopted, I shall rest satisfied with having done all that lay in my power to secure the affection of our Irish brethren, and to preserve the tranquillity of the realm.

Mr. JOHN SMITH, M. P. with much energy seconded the Amendment of the Noble Earl. He lamented that sometimes from artifice, and often from ignorance, this important subject had been misrepresented and misunderstood. The real question was, whether rights in themselves inalienable, and belonging to man as his birthright, were to be withheld from four millions of the King's subjects. Those who were acquainted with the internal state of Ireland, knew that blood and carnage, from religious animosities, had often deluged its plains, and those who manned our fleets and filled our armies owed their birth to a country where wretchedness and poverty were equalled only by the misery of the inhabitants. It was said that the Irish nation was dissatisfied. When a right was detained it was natural, it was fit that they should be dissatisfied. As to the dangers so much talked of, they were altogether chimerical: the Pope was a prisoner to Buonapartè: the Catholic hierarchy was destroyed, and monastic institutions subverted; the idea of Catholic ascendancy was a mere bugbear, calculated to alarm and disturb the tranquillity of the nation, and if any attentions were due to authorities, the united opinions of Fox, Pitt, and Burke, might be quoted to prove that the fears indulged were fictitious and groundless. An Honourable Baronet had talked of Catholic Ministers and a Catholic King; the notion was ridiculous, since the Parliament would prevent both the one and the other. If history were examined, it would be found that the objections now urged against Catholics were adduced 200 years ago, without any regard to the change of circumstances. It was a remarkable fact that when guiltless men were executed for the Popish Plot, on the testimony of Titus Oates, they did not die maintaining their innocence, but insisting upon the falsity of the assertion, that the Pope could authorize the murder or deposition of a sovereign, and yet to this day was this absurd principle attributed to the Catholics. The Honourable Gentleman then went into a statement of the presumptuousness of this Meeting, in pretending to dictate to Parliament not to consider the subject, and concluded



by referring to the injury sustained by Christianity in all ages, from the prevalence of intolerance.

The EARL of DARNLEY expressed his surprise, that neither of the Members of the County had yet spoken. The Honourable Baronet belonging to this district (Sir W. Geary) thought it sufficient to indicate his opinion by putting his name to the requisition. It was not without great astonishment that the Noble Lord found, if there knowing the liberal sentiments of the Honourable Baronet upon most political topics, especially when the question was not whether Catholics should be allowed to participate in all the privileges of Englishmen, but merely whether the House of Commons should follow up its resolution of June last, to investigate this important subject. If, indeed the county of Kent thought it necessary to dictate to the House of Commons what was its duty, it would be the strongest argument in favour of parliamentary reform that had been ever heard. It did not appear quite decent that this Meeting would not allow the Legislature to decide upon a former part of its proceedings. It was requiring Parliament to shut its ears against the reiterated appeals of four millions, who were distinguished for patriotism and loyalty, and for the discharge of every domestic and social duty. After many years of patient inquiry, his Lordship was convinced of the propriety of these concessions, resisted only by ignorance and prejudice. In the time of Charles II. (whose reign was the most profligate and abandoned in our annals) when these disabilities were imposed, it should not be forgotten that the monarch was a concealed Catholic; the heir presumptive who afterwards succeeded as James II. was a known papist, and almost succeeded in overthrowing both church and state: the Catholic religion was at that time identified with arbitrary power, and those restraints were to prevent the total annihilation of our constitution. Was such any thing like the state of affairs now? There was not even a head to the Romish Church, and those who talked about the fears inspired by the Pope were the only true Papists, since it was they that created what would otherwise be a nonentity. The Pope had not been heard of till within these few days, when he was found among Buonaparte's other wild beasts at Fontainebleau. It would be imagined by those who only heard one side that the Catholics asked for some mighty power in the state: they only asked to be eligible to office, but the

choice was to be made by a protestant king, under a protestant government. Could four Catholic Peers, and less than ten Catholic Commoners, control both Houses of Parliament, they only consisting of 658 members? Was it likely that they should overbalance all the weight and property of the kingdom? his Lordship defied any man to make it appear morally possible.—Were the Catholics of Ireland so much worse than the Catholics of Kent, that they were to be dreaded like wild beasts?—What advantages might we not derive from Catholics being placed at the heads of our fleets and armies. Had Lord Wellington's parents been unfortunately Catholics, our victories in Spain might have been dreamt of, but never realized. If too the Pope was such a powerful agent, why did not Buonaparte employ him against us in those most bigoted countries of the Peninsula? The truth would turn out to be, that the grant of the claims of the Roman Catholics would strengthen instead of weakening the establishment; and that it wanted support, at this period, few men, who had duly inquired, would deny.

SIR W. GEARY admitted, that it had been his intention to have remained silent, because the publication of the requisition throughout the county was sufficient evidence of his opinions.—Called upon, however, by the personal allusions of the Noble Lord, he should endeavour to point out the real question, which had been completely misrepresented. The Noble Lord had maintained that the county had no right to state its opinion to the legislature upon this subject, because it precluded inquiry, which both the Houses had determined upon. Sir William denied that the Petition to-day proposed had for its object to prevent inquiry, and he pledged himself to support any claims of the Catholics short of those at present insisted upon. Was the Noble Lord really so ignorant of facts as not to know that the Board daily sitting in Dublin had positively declared, that it would be an imputation upon the principles of the whole Catholic body to accept any thing short of what the blood of Englishmen had flowed to resist, (Hear, hear; bravo!): that it was below the generous ambition of Irishmen to accept of any thing but unconditional emancipation? Men might assert what they pleased, but every day's experience shewed more and more clearly, that it was only a few men of disappointed and restless ambition that kept alive this turbulent spirit of the Catholics of Ireland, who



would otherwise rest tranquil and contented with the many important privileges they enjoyed that were not partaken by their ancestors. These ambitious individuals wished to become the counsellors of the King; and the Catholic Board, as the superiors, were first, it was to be presumed, to be accommodated with places near the throne. (Disapprobation and applause). They were to overturn that glorious Constitution for which Russel (a name he could scarcely mention without tears), had died to maintain. The Honourable Baronet pledged himself to follow that splendid example; and as long as resistance to Catholic ascendancy could be made, he would give it his strenuous opposition. Admiring the noble principle of toleration, he would go a great length to produce unanimity; but imminent dangers were to be contemplated, and it was the duty of all not only to provide against present, but against future mischief. What was there to prevent a Catholic Sovereign from ascending the throne, or to prevent him from choosing Catholic Ministers at some distant period? (Hear, hear.) We might be reduced to the shocking predicament of having a Catholic Ministry and a Catholic King. The country had once witnessed the misery of a Catholic King, and such an event might again occur. Jesuits might insinuate themselves into the bosom of the Monarch, and block up all the avenues to the throne. The imprisonment of the Pope by Buonaparté had been referred to. Did not this shew how completely the Pontiff was under the control of the bitter enemy of England? And what use might not be made of him to influence the uninformed minds of the Irish people? Buonaparté knew how valuable was such a sanction to his tyrannical usurpations, and had employed him at his own coronation.

LORD DARNLEY explained as to a misrepresentation by the Honourable Baronet, of what he said regarding the impossibility of the nation being governed by a Catholic King. He reminded him that the greater portion of the Popery code was not adopted until long after the Revolution, in the reign of Queen Anne.

SIR WM. GEARY, in addition, called the attention of the Noble Earl to the reign of James the 2d., who had been governed by a Jesuit, and asked him if he could possibly secure the nation against a similar occurrence?

SIR EDWD. KNATCHBULL solicited the pardon of the Noble Earl, lest, in the

course of the remarks he was compelled by personal allusions to make, any thing disrespectful fell from him. The Noble Earl appeared to know very little of the duty of a Member of Parliament; he had commenced by expressing his surprise that neither of the Representatives for the county had spoken; he required that they should first give their opinion; but the Noble Lord ought to be informed, that it became the Member for such a county as Kent, first to learn the wishes and opinions of his constituents, before he obtruded his own. When the Representatives were acquainted with the general sentiment, they were to draw their conclusions: the Member was not to dictate, but as far as he could, with a due regard to his conscience, to obey. The question of Catholic Claims had often been debated in Parliament, and he (Sir Edward Knatchbull) had always voted to the best of his honest judgment, and what had been his conduct in the past, should be his conduct in the future (applauses). Holding the situation he had so long filled, and with the connexions he had made, he should be happy to grant any favour or boon that could in reason be demanded, and which was consistent with the safety of the Constitution, but hitherto he had foreseen dangers, which had induced him to give his vote in opposition to those who sought to remove their disabilities: if at the present moment any adequate security could be afforded for the grant, he would pledge himself to maintain the claim of the Catholics; but if such security was not given, his vote should continue on the same side that it had hitherto been given, when the question was debated in a higher tribunal. The petition met with his entire approbation, and he should, he said, be happy to do his utmost in support of it, when it was presented to Parliament.

Mr. CALCRAFT advanced to the front of the Hustings, and addressed the High Sheriff. He said that he was as warm an admirer as the Honourable Baronet (Geary) of the Revolution of 1688; and although the conclusion he should come to would be different, he thought he could shew that he has fully acted up to its spirit. He was as anxious as any man for the preservation of the Protestant Establishment; but he believed that ample security could be given, by which all dangers would be removed. He begged to read to the Meeting the Resolution passed by the House of Commons, in June last, declaring that the Roman Catholic claims should be considered; and



having voted in its favour, he could not approve of a Petition, the object of which went to render it nugatory. The proposal made by Col. Stratford unfairly prejudged the question: It told Parliament, you have acted imprudently, and without examination decided that which ought not to be determined without the most minute inquiry. The Revolution, it was true, was a Protestant Revolution; but how different were the circumstances of the times. Besides a Popish Sovereign, there was soon afterwards a Popish Pretender; and the Sovereign Pontiff was almost in the zenith of his power. Now the Protestant succession had been long settled; there was no Pretender, and the Pope was a prisoner, an incumbrance to Buonaparté, who could not employ him to advantage in any country of Europe. In Canada we had a splendid instance of Catholic loyalty: Catholic establishments were there countenanced, and the Catholics had resisted the Pope, Buonaparté, and the Americans, his allies. One Hon. Baronet trembled at the name of a Jesuit. Where they were now to be found Mr. Calcraft was ignorant; but if he should want one, would apply to his worthy Friend, who probably had a few in petto, that he kept and exhibited like wild beasts. A Pope King was also much dreaded by him; but until the Act of Settlement were repealed, he could not sit upon the British Throne. As to a Popish Parliament, it was ridiculous to entertain such an idea. The elective franchise had already been granted, and all the influence they could have they exercised through Protestants. Was it possible that five millions of Catholics should destroy and annihilate twenty millions of Protestants? What would ten Catholic Members do against 650 Protestant Representatives, even were the former aided by a Popish King and a Jesuit adviser? The great authorities of Pitt, Fox, and Burke had been quoted; but Mr. Calcraft could add the names of five succeeding Lords Lieutenant of Ireland, who all concurred in the necessity of concession to the Catholics: they were, Earl Fitzwilliam, Earl Camden, Marquis Cornwallis, Earl Hardwicke, and the Duke of Bedford. Earls Camden and Hardwicke became proselytes in favour of the Papists, although they were sent out by Administrations who were founded upon opposition to their claims. He was as firmly persuaded that the concession to the Catholics would give additional security in Church and State, as he was of his exist-

ence. The Noble Earl (Thanet) had read to the meeting one Oath which the Catholics took to the Sovereign to secure their allegiance, but many others might be adduced in the wording equally strong, imposed by the Legislature for various purposes. Those prescribed by the 13th, 14th, and 28th of the King were always subscribed, and no man could say that they were not inviolably observed. Of the faith and loyalty of the natives of Ireland, no man entertained a doubt; if great and brilliant achievements were performed by our troops, or by any particular regiment, it would almost invariably be found that Roman Catholics formed no inconsiderable proportion of the force that so distinguished itself. It could not be said that they did not respect their oaths, because oaths only kept them out of all the offices of the state; if they would condescend to subscribe the oaths of Supremacy and Transubstantiation, no objection could be made to their eligibility to Parliament, or to any of the dignities of the State; but their adherence to their faith, the respect they shewed to the sacred obligation, kept in the hands of the Protestants all temporal power, and the Catholic, who for gain would sacrifice his conscientious scruples, was below contempt. Allusions had been made to the Catholic Board of Dublin, but the Legislature was not to attend to the inconsiderate nonsense of a few individuals; and if the Catholics did not chuse to accept the boon offered, on the terms Parliament should fix, it must be rejected; but Parliament, and not the Catholics, nor the Board at Dublin, were to dictate what should or should not be the securities to be given. The apprehensions, therefore, expressed respecting the proceedings or the threats of a noisy set of barristers, were wholly groundless.

SIR W. GEARY in explanation observed, that he did not intend to be understood as asserting that Jesuits were now to be found in Europe; the only remnant, he believed, was in South America. Of the ascendancy and power of the Priests in Ireland, he could adduce a melancholy instance, of the 68 respectable persons, taken prisoners at Wexford during the rebellion.

MR. CALCRAFT objected to the Hon. Baronet going into new matter in explanation.

SIR W. GEARY dropt that point, and proceeded to advert to the Catholic Board, which he insisted was composed of Delegates from the general body.

MR. CALCRAFT said that they were not delegates.



SIR W. GEARY added, that it was difficult to know what to call them but ambitious Catholics. Sometimes they went by one name, and sometimes by another, as if they were afraid to call themselves by their real character. They were appointed by one great mass of the Catholics of Ireland, and he considered them as the greatest enemies to their country and to their religion. If concessions were made to the Papists, by abrogating the test acts, it would be the most grievous injustice, if the act of settlement were not also repealed, so as to allow the Sovereign, if he chose it, to become a Catholic without danger of being deposed.

MR. LARKIN, of Rochester, after a considerable struggle, during which he insisted vehemently upon his right to speak, obtained a hearing. He was a man of Kent, and would not be intimidated by Kentish men. His principal object, he said, was to call the attention of the Meeting to the real question, not whether emancipation should or should not be granted, but merely whether the propriety of making any concessions should or should not be examined. It was inconsistent with the liberality of the inhabitants of the County, by adopting the Petition proposed to-day, to put a stop to inquiry. The Meetings against the claims of the Catholics were generally convened by the Clergy of the Establishment.—(Cries of no, no, and applause.)—He repeated the assertion, and added, that when they could find none to sign it but themselves, they were compelled to put down their own signatures alone, as was the case of the Chapter noticed the other day in the House of Lords, by the Duke of Norfolk, where seven names only could be procured. He recommended that the Established Clergy should attend to their duty, and not interfere in politics: they should endeavour to heal, instead of exciting animosities; they should practise as well as preach the word of peace. (Loud applause.)

SIR EDWARD KNATCHBULL interposed to speak to order, but was not successful.

MR. LARKIN proceeded: he knew many excellent Members of the Church of England, but he should respect the general body more, if they were content to labour in their vocation. He went on to notice the singular scrupulousness of Sir Edward Knatchbull, who to-day, for a wonder, had talked of obeying the instructions of his constituents; when had he not acted in opposition to the wishes of five-sixths of the Electors?

THE HIGH SHERIFF spoke to order.

MR. LARKIN complained that he was the only person called to order. Sir Edward Knatchbull had been allowed to proceed at length without saying one syllable to the question. He concluded by calling upon the Meeting to recollect, that in voting for the Petition they shut the door upon all inquiry, and that in supporting the Amendment they pledged themselves to grant nothing if such grant were found upon investigation to be inexpedient.

After some slight altercation between Lord Thanet, Sir W. Geary, and Lord Darnley, the Petition and Amendment were severally read. The question was put upon the Amendment, which, on the shew of hands, was negatived. The question was then put upon the Petition.

THE SHERIFF on the shew of hands said, that the majority was *decidedly* in favour of the Petition.

THE EARL OF THANET interrupted him, and objected to the word *decidedly*. He called on the Sheriff to look around him, and before the question was finally decided, to correct his expression. The Sheriff did so, and with great candour declared that the numbers were more nearly equal than he had supposed; but upon the whole, he must say, that the majority was in favour of the original Petition.

COLONEL STRATFORD moved, that the Petition be left at the Bell Inn for signatures, and that it be presented to the Lords by the Marquis Camden, and to the Commons by the Members for the county.—The motions were severally put and carried.

SIR W. GEARY moved the thanks of the Meeting to the High Sheriff, but from some neglect the question was not put.

THE EARL OF THANET observed, that another opportunity should be afforded, although perhaps not this year, of ascertaining the real sense of the county, when the clouds of prejudice which had been purposely spread had been cleared away. The notice of the present Meeting had been too short.

MR. WELLS stated that the Meeting had been twice advertised at a week's distance, and as much time as possible had been allowed.

THE EARL OF THANET explained.

LORD DARNLEY said, that several of his friends had never heard of the meeting until he wrote to them. He pledged himself to give the County an opportunity of fairly deciding upon this important subject.

SIR EDWARD KNATCHBULL combated



the insinuation that the real sense of the county had not been to-day ascertained. He contended that no future decision could subvert the regular proceeding just witnessed, in which truth had obtained a signal triumph.

The Meeting was then dissolved by the High Sheriff.

### CATHOLIC CLAIMS.

#### *Irish Petition against them.*

PETITION of the Protestant Freeholders and Inhabitants of the COUNTY of SLIGO. To the Honourable the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.—The Humble Petition of the Inhabitants and Freeholders of the County of Sligo, in the Kingdom of Ireland, professing the Protestant Religion,

Sheweth,—That we your Petitioners have observed with anxious alarm, the renewed Claims of the Roman Catholics of this Kingdom, for the unqualified repeal of those Laws, which are the securities of our civil and religious liberties. These Claims, made under the name and pretext of religious freedom and toleration, have been advanced in a tone of requisition and menace. To the wisdom and dignity of Parliament, we confidently submit the consequences of yielding to menace, and suffering (as heretofore has happened) the concessions of goodwill or justice, to be attributed to so unworthy and degrading a motive.—The complaint of want of religious freedom and toleration, we solemnly assert to be as unfounded in fact, as in law. The laws support those sacred principles to all,—and if they did not—we trust we possess too much of the genuine principles of Christianity, as taught in the Established Church, to be in any way instrumental in infringing on either.—We are conscious, and the Roman Catholics are so too, that they possess both—not only in a degree never yet permitted to Protestants in a Roman Catholic State, but in the fullest manner in which they are capable of being enjoyed. Those Laws, so sought to be repealed, are termed a Penal Code.—A Statement of them, and their immediate and consequential operation, has been adopted at the Aggregate and County Meetings of the Roman Catholics as their Case. Under that adoption it assumes importance. Much argument and inference in the late Parliament has been founded both on the Name and the Statement. We

therefore feel authorized to protest against both. Against the Name as misapplied and delusive. Against the Statement as containing the most dangerous species of actual and argumentative falsehood. That in which falsehood stands in some places, boldly glaring and alone. In others, so artfully intermixed with truth, as in effect to make it only its instrument and support. It over-rates the population of the Country, and their proportion of it, in an excessive degree, as far as can be collected from any Census hitherto taken. In a greater degree it over-rates the comparative property of that sect, real and personal. It exaggerates consequential disadvantages; and alleges injuries, which we have never known to exist, and never before heard complained of. The Name we are led to notice, not only as misapplied but delusive; to suit the clamour of grievance, it is adopted and applied, indiscriminately to those laws, constitutional and fundamental, which exclude Catholics from the Throne, the Government, and the Legislature; as well as to those, which affected their persons, properties, and religious worship. These latter Statutes (not enacted until after the Revolution, and which were entitled Acts to prevent the further growth of Popery;) were those alone distinguished by the name of Penal Code, all of which have been long since repealed. We cordially concur in the repeal. We owe it, however, to the memory of those who enacted them to say, That if they were severe and cruel, they were but retaliatory of still greater cruelty, not enacted merely, but unrelentingly inflicted, with and without law, during the entire Reign of James II. We wish to consign both cause and effect to eternal oblivion: But deem it as unjust, as unnatural in us, to suffer the odium and regret, which are due to both, to fall on one side only. Let us be suffered to forget them altogether; and let not their memory be revived by partial statement, still less by re-introducing the cause from whence they arose—Religious Party struggling for Political Power. It was that contention, and the crimes and miseries which grew out of it, which caused the enactment of those laws that remain, and are now complained of, as a Roman Catholic grievance. By those laws, which are not penal, but constitutional and fundamental, it has been provided; That the Government, the Legislature, the King, shall be Protestant—Protestantism is the essence of the Constitution. Its first and most vital principles are interwoven with



it; and when our civil rights, founded on those principles, were fixed at the Revolution; Protestantism was the sacred bond within which they were enveloped and enshrined. The whole was secured and sanctified by oaths and religious tests.—The great and wise men whose work this was, left to their posterity the trial of its effects. They have had above a century of proof, and the result has been,—to Great Britain it has proved a period of the greatest external glory and internal prosperity, that any empire was ever known to possess. To Ireland it was the only period of internal peace to be found in the annals of her history. With this double proof before our eyes, of what these nations were without the system, and what they have been under it; we are called on to destroy and reverse it. We humbly hope and pray, that the destructive delusion of theory, may not be suffered to destroy the solid foundations of experience. If, as now only is sought, exclusion only is to be removed from the Legislature and Government, and to continue annexed to the Crown, we know not on what theoretical principles of the Constitution it can be supported; that religious fetters shall be imposed upon the conscience of the Sovereign, and not on those of the Members of the Legislature, or of the great officers of State. The converse would be more consistent—for the constitutional principle which removes the responsibility of Government from the Sovereign to his Ministers, gives the greater importance to the political character of their faith. In consistency then, it must be removed from all, if from any, and if the Sovereign should become Roman Catholic, with Popish Ministers, and a mixed Parliament, (too likely under such circumstances to assimilate) under no pretence, still less principle, could the Church establishment continue Protestant. It would not, or could not be permitted to do so.—This would be Revolution, and the struggle it would probably cause, would be convulsive Revolution, and after all the miseries and desolations of such a State, the best result would be, to begin again where our ancestors took up the question. Practical theory then, as well as experience, pronounces against it.—We acknowledge a zealous and conscientious attachment to Protestantism. We are attached to it religiously as a faith. We are attached to it politically as the safeguard and deposit of our civil and religious liberties; and as the principle and condition by which the illus-

trious House of Brunswick acquired, and holds its title to the throne of these realms. We can see no reason for departing from it. Every principle which caused its adoption remains in full force, and experience has established the necessity for its permanence.—But the public safety and the public peace are said to demand the concession of it. We deprecate the discussion of such questions; for we know the mischiefs and dangers attendant on it.—But suggested, and advanced, and argued on, as they are; we deny that the first is in danger, or that the latter can be promoted by such concession. The proud state of prosperity, which the case adopted by the Roman Catholics boasts of, gives sufficient security in their good sense, if we could suppose it wanting in their loyalty. To apprehend the danger, we must deny confidence in the oaths which they have so repeatedly taken, and must believe them capable of committing treason as well as perjury, in resistance of a settlement; which, within twenty years, was accepted by them as final, and satisfactory of their wishes as well as claims.—That it would conduce permanently to public peace we still more confidently deny. We conceive it would have the opposite effect. It would give increased incitement, and energy, and interest, to party spirit. We had hoped party spirit would subside; but the events of the last two years, all we see and hear about us, and above all, the insatiable claims, and inextinguishable party-spirit, manifested in the adopted case we have mentioned, have torn from us that flattering expectation.—In every view we take of this subject and its consequences, the more we reflect upon it; the more we see cause to deprecate any fundamental change. We firmly believe, that if any such shall be effected, it will in its certain consequences, prove subversive of the English settlement of this country; and not remotely, of the connexion between the two kingdoms.—We therefore humbly Pray, that no alteration shall be suffered to take place, in the fundamental laws of our happy constitution, as established at the enlightened period of the Revolution. We further Pray, that that constitution so established, may be secured against all future assaults or encroachments; and that a period may be put to the continual and injurious agitations of this subject, by giving such additional force to the oaths and tests which secure it, as may finally close the question against all future danger, doubt, or discussion.

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## CATHOLIC CLAIMS.

ADDRESS to the Protestants of Great Britain and Ireland, by CHARLES BUTLER, Esq. of Lincoln's Inn.

In the last Sessions of Parliament, the House of Commons came to a resolution, that "the House would early in the next Session take into its most serious consideration the laws affecting His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects in Great Britain and Ireland, with a view to such final, conciliatory adjustment, as might be conducive to the peace of the United Kingdom, the stability of the Protestant establishment, and the general satisfaction and concord of all classes of His Majesty's subjects."

Encouraged by this resolution, the Roman Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland intend presenting immediately separate Petitions to each House of Parliament, "for a repeal of the penal and disabling statutes, which still remain in force against them."

In the mean time they observe with great concern and surprise, that attempts are made to prejudice the legislature against their application. Many erroneous, artful, and inflammatory publications of this tendency, have been actively and extensively circulated. The charges brought in them against the Roman Catholics, are of the most serious nature. The object of this address to you, is to answer these charges, and to state to you, succinctly, the grounds of the intended application of the English Roman Catholics to the legislature for relief. The greatest part of what is intended to be said in the address will apply, in a great measure, as much to the situation of the Irish and Scottish, as to the situation of the English Roman Catholics: but as the penal codes of Ireland, Scotland, and England, in respect to Roman Catholics, are very different, it has been thought advisable to confine the present address to the case of the English Roman Catholics only.

## I.

It is generally represented in the publications of which we complain, that the English Roman Catholics labour under no real grievance; and that, if all the remaining penal laws against them were repealed, the number of those, who would be really benefited by the repeal, would be too insignificant to make their relief an object of legislative concern.

But this representation is altogether erroneous—the English Catholics labour

under many severe penalties and disabilities: their whole body is affected by them, and would be essentially benefited by their removal.

1st. By the 13th Charles 2d, commonly called the Corporation Act, their whole body is excluded from offices in cities and corporations.

2d. By the 25th Charles 2d, commonly called the Test Act, their whole body is excluded from civil and military offices.

How injurious these acts are, both to the public and to the individuals on whom they operate, appeared in 1795, in which year, during the then great national alarm of invasion, Lord Petre, the grandfather of the present Lord, having, with the express leave and encouragement of Government, raised, equipped, and trained, at his own expense, a corps of 250 men for His Majesty's service, requested that his son might be appointed to the command of them. His son's religion was objected, his appointment was refused, and another person was appointed to the command of the corps. You cannot but feel how such a conduct tended to discourage the Catholics from exertions of zeal and loyalty; but the noble family had too much real love of their country to resile from her service, even under these circumstances. His Lordship delivered over the corps, completely equipped and completely trained, into the hand of Government, and his son served in the ranks. Surely you cannot think that laws, which thus tend to alienate the hearts, and paralyze the exertions of those who, in the hour of her danger, thus wished to serve their country, are either just or wise.

3d. By the 7th and 8th of William 3d, ch. 27, Roman Catholics are liable to be prevented from voting at elections.

4th. By the 30th Car. 2d, s. 2. c. 1. Roman Catholic Peers are prevented from filling their hereditary seats in Parliament.

5th. By the same statute Roman Catholics are prevented from sitting in the House of Commons.

6th. By several statutes Roman Catholics are disabled from presenting to advowsons, a legal incident of property, which the law allows even to the Jew.

7th. Though a considerable proportion of His Majesty's fleets and armies is Roman Catholic, not only no provision is made for the religious comforts and duties of Roman Catholic soldiers and sailors, but, by the articles of war, they are liable to the very heaviest pains and penalties for refusing to join in those acts of outward conformity to



the religious rites of the established church, which a Roman Catholic considers to amount to a dereliction of her faith. By the Articles of War, sect. 1, a soldier absenting himself from divine service and sermon, is liable, for the first offence, to forfeit 12d., and for the second, and every other offence, to forfeit 12d., and to be put in irons. By the same Articles, sect. 2. art. 5. "If he shall disobey any lawful command of his superior" (and, of course, if he shall disobey any lawful commands of his superior officer to attend divine service and sermon,) "he shall suffer death, or such other punishment as by a general Court Martial shall be awarded."

In the last Parliament, it was shewn that a meritorious private, for refusing (which he did in the most respectful manner) to attend divine service and sermon, according to the rites of the established church, was confined nine days in a dungeon on bread and water.

The Roman Catholics acknowledge with gratitude, not only the virtual suspension of these laws, in consequence of the orders recently issued by his Royal Highness the present Commander in Chief, and the facilities which they afford for enabling the Roman Catholic soldiers to attend their own religious worship; but they beg leave to observe, that these humane regulations still want the firm sanction of law, and therefore, to a certain extent are still precarious.

8th. In common with the rest of His Majesty's subjects, Roman Catholics contribute to the religious establishment of the country: they have also to support their own religious functionaries; and thus, have a double religious establishment to defray. Of this, however, they do not complain; but they think it a serious grievance, that their own religious endowments are not legalized like those of the Protestant Dissenters.

In hospitals, workhouses, and other public institutions, the attendance of the ministers of their own communion is sometimes denied to the poor of the Roman Catholic Religion, and the children of the Roman Catholic poor are sometimes forced into Protestant schools under the eyes of their parents.

## II.

Such, fellow-subjects, is the particular

operation of the principal laws still remaining in force against your English Catholic brethren. The *general effect* of them is, to depress every member of the body below his legitimate level in society.

Even in the very lowest order of the community, some situations conferring comfort, emolument, or distinction, are open to the individuals of that class, and in proportion as the several classes of society rise into importance, these situations are multiplied. From all of them the law excludes the English Catholic. This effectively places him below his Protestant brethren of the same class, and makes the whole body in the estimation of the community, a depressed and isolated cast.

This the Roman Catholics severely feel, but it is not by its substantial effects alone that they feel their depression. Some avenues of wealth are still open to them, none to honours or distinctions. Thus, thousands of those possibilities, the prospect and hope of which, constitute a large proportion of the general stock of human happiness, are peremptorily denied to the Roman Catholics. No hope of provision, of preferment, of honours, or dignity, cheers their souls or excites their exertions. A Roman Catholic scarce steps into life when he is made to feel that nothing, which confers them, is open to him; and however successful his career may have been, it seldom happens that his success has not been on more than one occasion, either lessened or retarded by the circumstance of his having been a Roman Catholic.

Here then our Protestant countrymen are called upon to place themselves in our situation; and to reflect, what their own feelings would be, if, from a conscientious adherence to their religious principles, they belonged to a class thus legally degraded. How often would they substantially feel the effects of this degradation? How many of their hopes would it destroy?—how many of their projects would it ruin? Surely a petition to the Legislature, from any portion of His Majesty's subjects, for the removal of such a woe, is entitled to the sympathy and aid of every other portion of the community.

## III.

We are sometimes told, that *however the repeal of the laws complained of by the*  
(*To be continued.*)